

Vassar College

Digital Window @ Vassar

Senior Capstone Projects

2020

Dialogues in paradise: translation's role in bridging cultural differences through literature

Megan J. Wang
Vassar College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone

Recommended Citation

Wang, Megan J., "Dialogues in paradise: translation's role in bridging cultural differences through literature" (2020). *Senior Capstone Projects*. 1020.
https://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone/1020

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Window @ Vassar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Window @ Vassar. For more information, please contact library_thesis@vassar.edu.

Vassar College

Dialogues in Paradise:
Translation's Role in Bridging Cultural Differences through Literature

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of Arts in
International Studies

by

Megan J Wang

Thesis Advisers:

Professor Peipei Qiu

Professor Timothy Koechlin

May 2020

Acknowledgements

I would like to my parents, for their unending support, love, and sacrifices; my big sister Julia who is always there to supply me with guidance, help, and joy; my greatest friends and forever housemates for their gifts of love, family, and community. To Mary Retta who has enriched my life with her care, art, and wisdom, Sarah Santaguida whose genius has taught me many lessons about living a full and wonderful life, Maya Allen whose loving friendship has given me so much strength, comfort, and laughter, and Maimuna Touray for being my role-model, a constant source of inspiration and love, and for teaching me to believe in myself.

Thank you to my advisor Professor Peipei Qiu for her kindness, wisdom, and patience. Without her enormous help and consideration, this project would have never existed; to Professor Timothy Koechlin, whose unbelievable support and compassion is a continued source of comfort; to my major advisor Professor Wayne Soon, who's expertly designed courses and guidance have taught me so much about the world and my place in it; and to Professor Anne Brancky, Professor Kirsten Wesselhoeft, and Will Rush who have shaped my experience at Vassar.

Thank you to my partner Robert Elizardo, for his unwavering support; and to my beautiful friends Ariana Smith, Jonathan Chung, Heather Phan Nguyen, Naomi Tashiro, Henery Wyand, Atticus Koizumi, Marine-Ayan Ibrahim Aibo, and Yume Murphy for brightening my life.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
I. Introduction.....	4
II. The Case for an Interdisciplinary Study of Comparative Literature and Translation.....	8
III. Case Study: A Reading of Can Xue’s 天堂的对话 (Dialogues in Paradise).....	16
IV. Thinking Translation: A Comparison of the English Translation and Original Text of “Dialogues in Paradise”	28
V. Between Multiculturalism and Postcolonialism: Translation’s Positionality Today.....	37
VI. Conclusion.....	45
References.....	51

Chapter I

Introduction

- 1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.
- 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.
- 3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.
- 4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.
- 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.
- 6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.
- 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.
- 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.
- 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

— Genesis 11:1–9[6]

The passage above is a well-known biblical origin myth, the Tower of Babel. The story offers a reason for why the many peoples of the world speak different languages. It explains there once was only one language and man was able to build an impressionable tower that could reach God's kingdom in the sky. However, God decided to divide these men by making them speak in different tongues in order to impede their seemingly limitless progress. Through studying translation, my thesis will dispute the tacit suggestion within this narrative regarding language and

difference. Is language really a critical divisive factor that has the capacity to create chasms of incomprehension between people? More specifically, do different languages truly impede intercultural understanding?

For hundreds of thousands of years, language¹ has permeated nearly all facets of humanity's existence. As one of the most principal forms of expression, language dictates how people interact and communicate, be it through conversation, literature, politics, or the arts. In the field of International Relations, the many proliferations of language are a key element in understanding the extent to which various nations and their respective cultures are able to interact with each other, and the positionalities from which these groups interact.

At first glance, the answer to whether or not language creates difficulties in intercultural understanding appears quite obvious. In our modern day and age, in which technology is advancing at an alarming rate and societies across the globe seem more interconnected than ever, it is hard to believe that language could ever be a divisive factor. Many cultures consume the same media with subtitles, online translation services can roughly convert large passages of text into hundreds of languages in a matter of seconds, and many works of literature from all over the world are considered "classics" in cultures and languages they were not originally written in. Thanks to translation, or the process by which the meaning one language conveys is expressed in a different language, it seems difficult for one to argue that languages could ever possibly inform any lack of understanding.

But what of culture? Whether they are produced in a rigid one-to-one word equivalence or in a loose interpretative manner, translations only go so far in reproducing the exact expressions

1. Language being "the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way," and not, for example, body language.

of a phrase or passage. Especially in terms of literature, language often carries ample context that is imbued with cultural attitudes and historical references. In terms of cultures that have long standing geological, ideological and cultural differences, can translations adequately bridge such non-linguistic divides? The crux of my thesis is to interrogate the extent to which literature translations can enable the reader to cross cultural/linguistic divides.

In order to shed light on this topic, in chapter two, I present the academic disciplines this project operates under: Comparative Literature and Translation Studies. Utilizing selected samples of theory by notable scholars from both fields, like Sandra Bermann and André Lefevere, I explain why these two disciplines function well with each other. In chapter three, I present the piece of literature I will analyze in this thesis: “Dialogues in Paradise” by Chinese modernist author Can Xue, as well as provide reasoning for my selection of both this author and this work. In this chapter I attempt to ascertain meaning from the original text by establishing my own thematic framework of analysis. This chapter introduces key questions regarding the subjectivity of universal meaning and the importance of cultural knowledge in reading literature. The fourth chapter explores these questions more fully, as well as compares two passages from the English translation of “Dialogues in Paradise” with their Chinese counterparts. Revisiting theory from several Translation Studies academics, I ask: given the cultural gaps that inhibit an exact reproduction of the original text, and a ‘universal meaning’ may not exist, can we characterize this translation as a ‘literary renewal’?

Chapter five enlarges the scope of the thesis by delving deeper into the colonial implications of literary translations, discussing the conflict between an extreme utility for literature translations from nonwestern sources in our age of hyperconnectivity and multiculturalism, and the ever present dangers of appropriating nonwestern art and misrepresenting stories that are already underrepresented in the western canon. Chapter six or the conclusion, revisits the original

question from the beginning of the thesis: what role do translations of literature play in bridging cultural differences? I reiterate how “Dialogues in Paradise” and its English translation exemplify how certain cultural themes are unavoidably lost in translation, and the concept of a ‘literary renewal’ presents its own host of issues regarding the legacy and strong vestiges of colonialism. I finish the thesis with a short passage explaining my desire to write about translation in the first place, referencing my experiences as a multilingual person living in different cultural environments, and my studies of literature and language.

Ultimately, this project is a philosophical literary-based interrogation that is meant to bring a personal curiosity of mine to light regarding the integral role of language in conveying meaning, and the nuance of cultural differences. I hope to explore, in our age of hyperconnectivity, just how connected we really are.

Chapter II

The Case for an Interdisciplinary Study of Comparative Literature and Translation

In this chapter I discuss the utility of a study under both fields of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies.² I present several beneficial outcomes of scholarly work that operates under both of these disciplines. Then, I transition to explain in more detail what a study of translation and comparative literature looks like in practice. I conclude the section by comparing several academic theories on translation that will ultimately inform a deeper examination of the literature case study of Can Xue's work.

Comparative Literature is an academic field that deals with the study of literature and cultural expression across linguistic, national, and disciplinary boundaries. While studies in Comparative Literature often compare two different pieces of text that share one or several qualities, I argue in this chapter that a comparative study of different translations can produce interesting literary analysis. While reproductions of an original source text, translations, because of their different modes of linguistic based expression, can not only constitute different pieces of text ripe for analysis, but also serve as logical additions to any study in comparative literature dealing with the international.

2. In this thesis, I choose to refer to Translation Studies as a field and discipline. While this is contested by some due to its interdisciplinary nature and strong connection to other fields like linguistics, philosophy, and of course, comparative literature, a call for the individuality of such an academic discipline began in the late 1950s. However, as early as in 1972, translation studies as a discipline began to be commonly referred to and classified.

The benefits that translations bring to the broad literary phenomenon are two-fold: the addition of insightful text interpretations as well as far reaching academic implications within the humanities. Before discussing these broader implications of the ‘marriage’ of these disciplines, I will first elaborate upon how such an interdisciplinary lens makes way for a richer understanding of a text. Studying translations heightens the interpretative dimension of a literary analysis of a certain text because we are not only privy to analyzing one singular text, but reproductions of it in various languages. It is these reproductions, or rather, transformations of the original source text that open up multiple new avenues for analysis and insight. Through translations of a source text, students compare and contrast multiple pieces of writing that possess different literary metaphors, cultural expressions, treatments of historical references, and certain variations in meaning. By examining new transformations of the literary work, readers analyze the choices translators have made in adapting cultural motifs to the source language’s culture for a specific audience to consume. Students can look into the artistic choices of the translator, how various translations across languages interpret and change passages of the original story, and the cultural implications that come out of this literary interaction. Beyond this, students can also examine what is left out of translated texts, and the consequential implications when reading a piece of literature that supposedly embodies a culturally grounded message. Studying translations ultimately allows for conjectures regarding the interaction of cultures and people and the transformation of meaning across cultural divides. As a result, the subsequent interpretations that can come out of a comparative literature study multiply drastically when translations are involved.

André Lefevere, considered by some as the father of modern Translation Studies was one of the first to suggest that translations add valuable nuance to literary studies. He explains how scholarly work that combines these two frameworks, in a way, allows literature studies to be

‘freed.’ He writes that in our modern world today, literature no longer functions as a secular scripture, or that for the most part, literature no longer constitutes a group of authoritative and declarative texts in which only very strict interpretations are allowed.³ With the added interpretative dimensions that translations carry, Comparative Literature studies “can be freed to assume the role of a laboratory in which all kinds of verbal and conceptual manipulations, packagings and constructions” are examined.⁴ In other words, by being able to analyze translations of a text, scholars of Comparative Literature are given freedom to operate in this conceptual laboratory that captures an exponentially greater amount of interpretative pathways.

Aside from the textually based aspects of this interdisciplinary approach, studying Comparative Literature with translations opens up reimaginings for the future of the literary humanities. Sandra Bermann stated in her provocative 2012 speech on Translation Studies that these two fields together emphasize the significance of language, literature, and culture, thus help us engage more deeply with the international breadth of arts and traditions that imagine the world in such diverse ways.⁵ She further emphasizes that such an intellectual marriage contributes to a global consciousness that is sensitive to the languages, cultures, and peoples of our polyglot planet, while drawing these supposedly disparate groups into a more equal conversation.⁶ Bermann’s point of view ultimately highlights both the ‘international’ aspect of both Comparative Literature and

3. André Lefevere, “Translation and Comparative Literature: The Search for the Center,” *TTR*, 4, no. 1 (2007): 143. Accessed April 24, 2020. <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/037086ar>

4. Lefevere, 143.

5. Sandra Bermann, “Working in the And Zone: Comparative Literature and Translation.” *Comparative Literature* 61, no. 4 (2009): 432. Accessed April 24, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/40600339.

6. Bermann, 432.

Translation Studies, as well as the growing shift in academic spaces towards anticolonial ways of thinking. Accepting literature from all parts of the world and analyzing their translations, rather than restricting our scope to texts from the western empire, can deepen our understanding of other cultures and nations, as well as the very differences that divide us.

In fact, Sandra Bermann goes so far as to say that analyzing difference itself is perhaps the most significant contribution Translation Studies and Comparative Literature bring to the academic table. She emphasizes the importance of dialogue in this connection of disciplines, “between texts, between languages, between cultures, between persons” for it “reminds us forcefully of the alterities that speak through any text.”⁷ This connection can produce not only numerous more nuanced analyses of literature itself, but also create an avenue for advancing the humanities towards a more anti-colonial, and reciprocal understanding born from a keener sensitivity between linguistic and cultural divides. As a result, perhaps the marriage of these two fields can form a collaborative space that can make university work more rewarding.

While this method of studying literature seems almost natural now as academic spaces are becoming more ‘internationally’ conscious, Translation and Comparative Literature were not always on such equal footing. According to Carlos G. Tee, during the earliest periods of comparative literature, translation was merely a poor relation assigned to do various uneasy roles. Regardless of the fact that translations were still being created, European comparatists simply did not trust translations, believing in their fundamental inability to fully represent an original work. As early as the time of Cicero, people believed that expressing the ideas, styles, emotions, and

7. Sandra Bermann, "Working in the And Zone: Comparative Literature and Translation." *Comparative Literature* 61, no. 4 (2009): 443. Accessed April 24, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/40600339.

forms of literary works in their entirety was impossible.⁸ However, as the discipline of Comparative Literature evolved to become less Eurocentric and treat non-European literatures, translations became more valued. André Lefevere situates the fluctuating value of translations and which works are translated within global power imbalances. He asserts that “comparatists who dismiss the relevance of translation are precisely those who are in practice devoted to the idea of a comparative literature limited to (western) Europe and its historical dependencies.”⁹ In other words, translations of nonwestern work threaten an elitist European hierarchy in the study of literature, and present a unique opportunity for enriching the field. Ultimately, while historically translation has been regarded as a last resort by many western elitists, as an unfortunate degradation of the quality of a certain work of literature, scholars like Lefevere and Tee are advocating for the removal of translation from the sidelines of comparative literature, and a reevaluation of which works are chosen to be translated by which parties.

In fact, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere have gone even further to claim that no study of Comparative Literature can take place without regard to translation. In “Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation,” they argue that Translation Studies is developing as a discipline in its own right, using a methodology that draws on comparatistics and cultural history.¹⁰ Combining these characteristics with the fact that translation has been a major shaping force in the

8. Carlos G. Tee, "Towards a new and more constructive partnership: the changing role of translation in comparative literature." *Fu Jen Studies: Literature & Linguistics*, no. 45 (2012): 2. Accessed April 24, 2020.

9. André Lefevere, “Translation and Comparative Literature: The Search for the Center.”

10. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), viii. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.vassar.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=16706&site=ehost-live>

development of world culture, Comparative Literature is thus incomplete without studying translations. Because both disciplines entail interrogating the dialogue between texts, between cultures, an encounter between these two fields is in fact, a natural unification that has the capacity to produce multiple layers of dialogue. Antoine Berman suggests “it is impossible to separate the history of translation from the history of languages, cultures, and of literatures”,¹¹ and as a result, regardless of their complicated past, the deeply intertwined nature of literature and translation implicates a bright future for intercultural and interlinguistic exchanges.

While such a bright future might seem only hypothetical, due to the substantial theoretical work done by scholars in both fields, the pedagogical approaches such a study might pursue are realistically imaginable. In fact, several theories in Translation Studies reflect the interesting observations that translation could offer in a case study of a short story. One avenue for analysis would reflect Walter Benjamin’s benchmark essay: *The Translator’s Task*. One of the most notable theoretical elements in his article is the concept of “pure language.” To explain what he means by a “pure language,” he utilizes an example of a Frenchman and a German referring to bread, but with different words.

In "Brof and "pain" the intended object is the same, but the mode of intention differs. It is because of their modes of intention that the two words signify something different to a German or a Frenchman, that they are not regarded as interchangeable, and in fact ultimately seek to exclude one another; however, with respect

11. Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, trans. S.Heyvaert (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), 16.

to their intended object, taken absolutely, they signify one and the same thing.¹²

Pure language refers to the underlying meaning of a collection of words that language attempts to capture. For Benjamin, translation, and the best kinds of it, allows pure language of the source text to shine through. In a study of comparative literature and translation, which I will undertake in the coming chapter, I will interrogate this theory of pure language - does such a pure language exist, or a central meaning underneath a certain text, when it comes to literature?

Takayuki Yokota-Murakami from the University of Osaka casts doubt upon this theory. In his article on Translation and Comparative Literature, he critiques the Cartesian way of looking at translation, arguing that Japanese poetry suggests that pure language does not exist when it comes to literature.¹³ He explains that the spirit of the Cartesian theory of a verbal act is grounded in conveying a message, or central meaning of the text.¹⁴ This is deeply connected to Benjamin's theory of "pure language." He argues that Descartes' project in the supremacy of a signified meaning/message from a source text is essentially monolingual and anti-Babelian, as it suggests the existence of a "universal language" into which all existing languages are reducible. However, he explains that in some works of Japanese poetry, "the literal, repetitive translation transfers the task of interpretation and of the creation of meaning to the readers. The translator does not take the responsibility (or the tyranny) of determining the message of the text to be translated, he

12. Walter Benjamin, "The Translator's Task," trans. Steven Rendall, *TTR* 10, no. 2 (1997): 156-157. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/037302ar>

13. Takayuki Yokota-Murakami, "Translation and Comparative Literature: A Theoretical Crossroad of Cartesianism, Japanese Linked Poetry, and Postcolonialism." *Pacific Coast Philology* 54, no. 1 (2019): 67. Accessed April 25, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/pacicoasphil.54.1.0056.

14. Yokota-Murakami, 57.

duplicates the original, and leaves the interpretation open to the reader.”¹⁵ While Takayuki makes key observations on the role of the translator, what is most relevant to my case study is his rejection of a supremacy of meaning in literature. For him, literature does not have to have a “pure language” underlying it, nor a universal language it can be reduced to. When language is transformed from source text to reproductions in other languages in cultures, it is up to the reader to make these interpretations about its newfound meanings. Both these contesting theories place my original questions regarding language, changing meaning between translations into focus. As I study the English translation of a short story by Can Xue, will I discover a pure underlying meaning underneath the source text that is carried into the reproduction? Or rather will I come to terms with how meanings, an already ephemeral concept in themselves, when vehiculed across national and linguistic and cultural boundaries, inevitably morph based on who reads the text?

15. Yokota-Murakami, 67.

Chapter III

Case Study: A Reading of Can Xue's 天堂的对话 (Dialogues in Paradise)

In this section, I present my reading of the source text in Chinese of Can Xue's short story, "Dialogues in Paradise." After introducing the author and her unique writing style, I explain why I chose this short story in particular. Using a thematic framework, I describe several key themes Can Xue uses to convey important underlying meanings in her literary work. Lastly, I discuss the subjectivity of universal meaning given the abundance of personal interpretations, and the importance of cultural historical background when reading such a text.

Deng Xiao Hua, known by her pseudonym Can Xue, is a Chinese avant-garde experimentalist writer known for her abstract style and use of unconventional narratives. In Chinese, her pen name refers to the dirty form of snow that refuses to melt, as well as the purest form of snow that lies at the top of the mountain. Born in 1953 in Changsha, a city in Hunan Province of South China, Can Xue's early years were marked by the social turmoil of the Cultural Revolution. In 1957, persecuted by the Communist government, her father was condemned as an Ultra-rightist, and both her parents were sent to the countryside to conduct manual labor. As a

result, she only graduated from elementary school, and independently studied English and Western literature.¹⁶

While no stranger to the turbulence that political movements inspire, Can Xue explicitly denies the notion that her work contains political commentary. On the contrary, she describes her work as “soul literature” or “life literature.”¹⁷ Indeed, her novels and short stories possess a dream-like quality to them, lacking the typical structured character development and narrative logic that many readers of literature are accustomed to. She explains, “I never base my writing on concepts; I base my writing on feelings.”¹⁸ Her work has been critically praised by western audiences for its adventurous and experimental style that engages rapid shifts in space and logic. Compared to Western modernist writers like Kafka, Borges, and Calvino, Can Xue’s numerous short story collections and novels have been translated into various languages.

I selected Can Xue for this case study for several reasons. Her status as a modernist author, unafraid of radical forms of expression particularly interested me. I was similarly intrigued to see if and how her identity as a woman would be expressed within her writing. While there is a plethora of celebrated male modernist authors, I am more fascinated with the works of those who are underrepresented in their respective fields. By the same token, I wanted to select a Chinese author in order to have Chinese as the language of the source text. Due to the importance placed upon

16. MIT, “Can Xue,” Contemporary Chinese Writers, Accessed April 25, 2020. <http://web.mit.edu/ccw/can-xue/biography.shtml>

17. MIT, “Can Xue,” Contemporary Chinese Writers, Accessed April 25, 2020. <http://web.mit.edu/ccw/can-xue/biography.shtml>

18. Dylan Suher and Joan Hua, “An interview with Can Xue,” Asymptote, Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/interview/an-interview-with-can-xue/>

European and American art and literature, the ‘current’ of translation is often one-directional. Thus, I thought it would be a meaningful project to prioritize a non-western source text.

I chose her short story “Dialogues in Paradise,” using similar reasoning. This body of literature exemplifies her unique experimental writing style that rejects the typical structured plot progression adorned with character developments and a narrative flow. Instead, she evokes thematic sensations within the reader by using a combination of figurative metaphors, sensory descriptions, cultural imagery, and symbolic dialogue to convey a deeper message within the literature. Can Xue explains that her work possesses an innate “repelling force.” The “repelling force” is in other words, the initial reluctance to read her writing further because it requires a more thorough analysis and a higher degree of patience to ascertain meaning from her words. She writes, “the works don’t want to tell realistic stories. Their stories are one about souls, humanity, and writing itself...their reading requires great initiative on the part of readers.”¹⁹ “Dialogues in Paradise” is no exception. This collection of five short passages lacks a structured narrative, clear cut characters, nor any standard form of plot. The sequences are dream-like, as spaces morph, time is fluid, and tone rapidly shifts from nightmarish to idyllic. My thesis does not seek to treat the topic of one to one word equivalence. Rather, this project tries to discover if and how underlying meaning and themes within a text changes from source text to translation. As a result, Dialogues in Paradise is a fitting case study to choose, because it has virtually abandoned the plot-based use of language that equivalence-based examinations of translation occupy themselves with. Instead, with its eclectic mixture of rich cultural evocations, figurative symbols, and colloquial dialogue,

19. Can Xue, interview by Jonathan Griffith, *Chinese Literature Today*, February 2010.

this piece of literature presents an opportunity for analysis that can instead focus directly on the essence of the story itself: it's meaning.

In fact, the more I read “Dialogues in Paradise” in Chinese, the more I grew to understand Can Xue’s emphasis on persistence and initiative when reading her work. She explains that her stories are “full of exploring spirit.”²⁰ Because I am a heritage speaker of Chinese that has a proficient reading level but communicates best in colloquial settings, I initially feared that reading a poetic text that lacks a logical narrative would prove highly challenging. However, because I was often required to research the meaning of certain terms and vocabulary words, I spent more time focusing on each phrase than I would have if I breezed through the text in my native tongue. As a result, this slow and methodological process gave me time to truly process the language and the changes in theme, tone, and image. Interestingly enough, my status as a heritage speaker without a strong background in reading comprehension did not hinder my overall comprehension, but rather allowed me to assume what Can Xue describes as an ‘exploring spirit.’

In fact, the investigative attitude I adopted while reviewing the text line by line allowed me to decipher multiple interesting interpretations from Can Xue’s writing. In order to best convey my interpretation of the text, I will present an analysis of themes and symbols, rather than going through the short story in a chronological sequence. Although such themes like fish, loneliness, or intruders seemed disparate, when considered holistically through a thematic framework, a more cohesive analysis of the work grew clearer. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to my thematic analysis and personal interpretation of the story after having read and analyzed it in Chinese.²¹ I

20. Can Xue, *Chinese Literature Today*.

21. In what I recognize is an ironic choice, given my thesis is about translation and the changes of meaning between texts, I will use the English translation to supplement quotes that would otherwise be listed in Chinese. Because the thesis is written English for an English speaking audience, I felt it this most logical for the sake of convenience and accessibility.

will review and categorize themes I deemed important, to ultimately present my personal take on the underlying meaning of “Dialogues in Paradise”: a portrait of Can Xue’s inner spiritual world.

The concepts I deemed most pertinent can be divided along two literary axes: relation with *others* and relation with the *self*. Under the former, key ideas within the text were a sensation of longing and waiting for another, a feeling of loss due to abandonment by another, and the characterization of the other as both a guardian and an intruder. Under the latter, I read symbolic references to nature, animals, as well as an internal loneliness as all ideas contributing to her selfhood. However, at the intersection of these two thematic axes, or what I read as belonging to both categories of a relation with the self and the other, was her treatment of the notion of memory and the past.

Throughout all five sections of the short story, Can Xue alludes to waiting. At the very beginning of the first passage, the unnamed other (presumably who the narrator has these dialogues in paradise with), tells her “你只能等待”, or, “you can only wait.”²² Whether she is waiting for the smell of a tuberosa, waiting for the ‘other’ to meet her on the beach, waiting within a darkened room for a landslide to come, or pleading the other person to extend the favor and wait for her, this notion of recurring waiting holds qualities reticent of desperation and sorrow.

By the same token, recurrent allusions to abandonment possess a similar sorrowful tonality. Weaved through various parts of her writing, Can Xue cites instances of a person, who she addresses consistently as ‘you,’ disappearing. She writes “I shouldn’t be so confident about your existence because you might disappear one morning in the stream of people and become one of

22. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之一), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389426.html>

the thousands of unfamiliar faces.”²³ This nameless person she addresses disappears in another instance when she writes “you disappeared in the empty sky as abruptly as you had come.”²⁴ In another section, she writes of a cat that visits her but “leaves [her] always in the same place” and “despite [her] attempt to stop it, it disappears like magic”, and she finds herself standing alone.²⁵ Within these exchanges, these visitations by either the nameless person or various animals, Can Xue’s narrator experiences multiple scenarios in which she is not alone, but her companion flees just as soon as they had come. For her narrator, the ‘other’ is a transient figure, their companionship irregular and fleeting.

The last theme I identified under the categorization of relation with *others*, was the characterization as the other as either a guardian or an intruder. In the first section, the narrator cites a time when she was waiting for the smell of the tuberosa at night, and a dark shadow was standing at her door. She explains that although she shut her eyes he moved towards her and snatched her hair. She was horrified and screamed for her lover, (who we can assume is the ‘you’ she addresses throughout the first passage), while questioning how the intruder could have entered given that she checks the windows and doors every night. Most importantly, she writes that this intruder could not enter when her lover was sitting right outside her door. Her heart felt at ease

23. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之三), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389428.html>

24. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之四), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389429.html>

25. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之五), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389430.html>

seeing ‘his’ dark silhouette.²⁶ Despite her description of their movements, there are few differentiations from her lover who guards the door and the scary intruder who stands by the door. What if the vague ‘you,’ in her writing represents not two different individuals, one good, one bad, but a more ambiguous ‘other’? In an interpretative sense, perhaps the people in her life have occupied roles that have made her feel protected, but also roles that have made her feel encroached upon. By evoking moments of waiting, abandonment, and a dichotomy of protection and intrusion, Can Xue thematically illustrates her feelings about relationships with others.

In order to convey the relationship with her inner self, Can Xue uses numerous symbols drawn from nature. In an interview, Can Xue emphasized the importance she gives nature in her work: “the relationship between man and nature is that of having the same structures and sharing the same flesh. Nature is the highest form of existence...[mankind] exists as the children of nature.”²⁷ She explains that her beliefs are informed by her Chinese cultural perspective. Because she believes in nature in a culturally spiritual sense, her writings feature “existence and nonexistence, the spiritual and the material...locked in a life and death struggle, yet in the midst of that struggle, achieving a balance and harmony.”²⁸ In other words, for Can Xue, nature and its harmonious components collectively embody a peaceful rebalancing towards spiritual equilibrium. These culturally grounded beliefs are in turn reflected in her writing.

26. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之一), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389426.html>

27. Dylan Suher and Joan Hua, “An interview with Can Xue,” *Asymptote*, Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/interview/an-interview-with-can-xue/>

28. Dylan Suher and Joan Hua, “An interview with Can Xue.”

As a result, within “Dialogues in Paradise,” Can Xue writes numerous scenes in which her narrator describes how she feels while existing in natural settings. She writes about wind blowing from the mountain, the feeling of warmth from the sun, the voice of earthworms, and the sensations of ease and freedom from smelling wild chrysanthemum blossoms while watching passing wild geese.²⁹ When standing amongst tiny flowers and purple blue mist in a shady forest, she describes her feelings of wonder and peace.³⁰ In another scene, she writes about feeling a sense of harmony with other parts of nature. While running through the woods, she writes about hearing the mountain rumble while the oriole sings.³¹ Ultimately, existing within natural landscapes gives her a sense of peace, fascination, and fulfillment.

Another a repetitive motif related to nature are animals, each of which possess a unique cultural meaning. One of the most prominent animals is the fish. The narrator repeats multiple times within the short story her desire to one day become a fish. In part one, she wants to be able to swim freely and to be able to hide from who she is speaking to.³² In part four, she describes herself turning into a white whale, swimming and creating so much movement the room shakes.

³³ Symbolically employed in Chinese art and literature as an emblem of wealth or abundance, fish

29. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之二), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389427.html>

30. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之四), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389429.html>

31. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之四), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389429.html>

32. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之一), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389426.html>

are an auspicious symbol of freedom from all restraints. The Handbook on Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs asserts that “as in water a fish moves easily in any direction, so in the Buddha-state the fully-emancipated knows no restraints or obstruction.”³⁴. In other words, through an element of nature and an auspicious symbol in Chinese culture, Can Xue expresses a desire for freedom.

Can Xue’s usage of the poisonous snake, on the other hand, serves to convey a different meaning. In Chinese culture while the snake can symbolize fertility and rebirth, it also serves as an emblem of sycophancy, cunning, and evil.³⁵ In one instance, she speaks with an old woman who says that she knows how, in a particular place, the narrator is threatened by poisonous snakes.³⁶ In another scene, with her lover she even tramples poisonous snakes while laughing with her presumed lover.³⁷ Perhaps while interacting with these snakes that represent evil, her narrator is able to grapple with difficulties that plague her. While threatened by troubles in life, in some instances she is able to seek joy while conquering these evils.

The last theme I interpreted to characterize her relationship with her self is the recurrent sensation of loneliness. Her narrator often describes empty locations - empty houses, empty rooms, empty valleys, deserted hills. In the third section she writes about waking up in the morning and

33. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之四), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389429.html>

34. Charles Alfred Speed Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs: A Comprehensive Handbook on Symbolism in Chinese Art through the Ages* (Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing, 2006) 185.

35. Charles Alfred Speed Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, 348.

36. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之四), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389429.html>

37. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之一), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389426.html>

witnesses many individuals walking past her. Staring at the unfamiliar faces she expresses out loud how there must be someone that she knows here. The people continue to walk around her as mere passerby. She finishes the paragraph by explaining how she often spends her days in this way.³⁸ This emotion of loneliness amongst crowds, matched with the solitude in empty spaces adds to the visual portrait she paints of her relationship with herself.

At the intersection of these two thematic categorizations, or rather, a theme that speaks to both her relationship with the self as well as others is the theme of past and memory. Because the short story lacks a narrative progression, time is fluid in Can Xue's world in "Dialogues in Paradise." That being said, her narrator often references the past, as well as the illusory nature of memories. When speaking to her lover in part two, she explains that in the past, she knew them very well. In fact, during many of the meeting scenes with this other person, whether it is on a beach or in the forest, or by an empty house, she acknowledges how she has once known this person from the past.³⁹ In several other scenes, she questions the clarity and accuracy of her memory - if this person is truly the person she thinks it is. In the very first scene, she writes about how the fragrance of a flower has remained alive in her memory from a long time ago.⁴⁰ In part three, Can Xue writes about looking at a photograph and being unsure of who the photograph is of. She explains that the problem is that the answer is quite like a riddle - refusing to come to you whenever you wanted it to.⁴¹ In their content of the memories, the theme of memories of the past

38. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之三), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389428.html>

39. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之二), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389427.html>

40. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之一), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389426.html>

speaks to her relationship with others in the story. However, these remembrances of the past also speak to her relationship with herself. By interrogating her internal recollections, she self reflects by reaching within herself for the answers.

In a critique of a collection of her short stories, including “Dialogues in Paradise,” Daniel J. Bauer of Fu Jen University warns that because of the styling of her writing, readers may come up empty-handed.⁴² He believes that these are stories which gesture toward truths they cannot hold, and cannot quite articulate.⁴³ Can Xue herself has claimed that her style of writing is based on feelings rather than concrete ideas. She describes her writing style as a pattern of cognition called “rational intuition.”⁴⁴ While I agree it is difficult to ascertain meaning and conceptualize her literary messages given this difficult style, I disagree with Bauer’s conclusion that “Dialogues in Paradise” suffers “little inner logic or theme.”⁴⁵ Through a methodological thematic break down of relationship to self, relationship to others, and an intersection of both, I have found great interpretative value within this short story.

Ultimately, my personal reactive reception of “Dialogues in Paradise” has led me to conclude that this story deals with the inner complex, beautiful, frightening, spiritual world of Can Xue. Through these ‘dialogues’ (with an unnamed man, a scary old woman, and her inner self) she

41. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之三), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389428.html>

42. Daniel J. Bauer, *Asian Folklore Studies* 49, no. 2 (1990): 338. Accessed April 27, 2020. doi:10.2307/1178049.

43. Daniel J. Bauer, *Asian Folklore Studies*, 339

44. Dylan Suher and Joan Hua, “An interview with Can Xue,” *Asymptote*, Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/interview/an-interview-with-can-xue/>

45. Daniel J. Bauer, *Asian Folklore Studies* 49, no. 2 (1990): 339. Accessed April 27, 2020. doi:10.2307/1178049.

allows the reader to inhabit the subconscious dream world of a woman who, in a quite vulnerable way, explores her relationship with herself and others by creating sensations through dreamy phrases that evoke the tenderness of love, the pain of loss and abandonment, the inescapable yet hazy nature of memories. In essence, “Dialogues in Paradise” is an exploration of the self and its interpersonal relations. Within this primitive, fantastical, and familiar landscape, Can Xue exposes hidden traumas that only her most persistent and patient readers are capable of unearthing. She dialogues with the other, she dialogues with herself, and within the intersection of both dialogues, molds an internal landscape - a “paradise” in which she can ultimately speak her mind and tell her story.

That being said, this thematic framework is entirely constructed from my own reading analysis. Given the fact that Can Xue’s writing lacks a narrative flow and is filled with thematic imagery, I am confident that other readers would make their own varied interpretations, no matter their respective cultural backgrounds. Moreover, when considering how the interpretation of literature is strongly based in the reader’s personal experience, I wonder if ‘universal meaning’ in literature exists at all. Therefore, in the next section when I attempt to see if the English translation of “Dialogues in Paradise” adequately bridges cultural difference to convey meaning in another language, I will do so in a way that focuses on the cultural motifs I addressed earlier in this chapter like symbols and nature, as well as the practice of critically analyzing translations themselves, while actively acknowledging the subjectivity present when reading literature, and in my thesis project as a whole.

Chapter IV

Thinking Translation:

A Comparison of the English Translation and Original Text of “Dialogues in Paradise”

In this section, I demonstrate how critically comparing translations of literature allows for deeper insights regarding the nature of intercommunication between different cultural contexts. The first half of the chapter establishes a theoretical framework. I discuss what translation scholars Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere call the ‘cultural turn’ in Translation Studies, and stress the importance of critically thinking about literature translations in tandem with the cultural contexts they belong to. I explain how evaluating non-equivalence in translations is equally important. The second half of the chapter applies previously discussed theories in order to compare the English translation of “Dialogues in Paradise” with the original Chinese text. Comparing three elements of

a passage from the original short story with the English counterparts, I ask if the translated text adequately traverses difference as a faithful reproduction of the original piece despite the substantial cultural differences between western and Chinese culture. I conclude that given the failure of the translation to establish the same atmospheres as the original, this particular translation is unable to compensate for the cultural gap without additional explanatory notes. Instead of deciding translation is incapable of bridging difference, I interrogate whether the very existence of such a translation can act as a cultural bridge. This chapter concludes by acknowledging how answering this question requires further analysis into translation's relationship with current colonial relations.

Integral to the practice of studying a translation in a comparative sense is accounting for the close relationship between culture and language. Commonly assumed to deal with linguistic factors, translation is now increasingly recognized by scholars in Translation Studies as a nuanced process that involves both language and culture. Marina Manfredi, in *Translating Text and Context*, argues that when we view language as a highly social phenomenon indisputably embedded in culture, culturally oriented and linguistically-oriented approaches to translation do not have to be mutually exclusive.⁴⁶ H.M. El-dali claims that the object of research in Translation Studies is not so much language itself, but rather human activity in various cultural contexts.⁴⁷ In other words, language is so heavily impacted by cultural factors, that the study of translation must deal with the cultural ideologies that are deeply intertwined in any given language. In her essay

46. Marina Manfredi, *Translating Text and Context: Translation Studies and Systemic Functional Linguistics*, (Bologna: Asterisco, 2014), 204.

47. Hosni Mostafa El-dali, "Towards an understanding of the distinctive nature of translation studies," *Journal of King Saud University - Languages and Translation* 23, no. 1 (2011): 37.

called *The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies* from 1998, Susan Bassnett acknowledges the ‘cultural turn’ in Translation Studies, when the academic scope was redefined to study the text embedded in a network of cultural signs from both the source and target cultures. As a result, Translation Studies work uses linguistic material but moves beyond it to study the world and international cultural relations at large.⁴⁸

Going hand in hand with the cultural turn in Translation Studies is the shift from notions of equivalence to non-equivalence. Theoretical in nature, equivalence is the idea that when evaluating translations, one should examine how ‘alike’ they are and exactly they match up word for word. Mary Snell-Hornby argues however, that the idea of equivalence promotes an inaccurate depiction of symmetry between languages, while also treating source texts as a pure and rigid standard to which translators are subordinate to.⁴⁹ In reality, many phrases and concepts in certain languages cannot be conveyed uniformly in other languages, and translators must make subjective decisions to find substitutions to translate the meanings phrases carry to a specific audience. Instead, the idea of nonequivalence promotes more nuanced cases of analysis. Rather than pursue an impossible goal of achieving an exact translation, nonequivalence allows translators and scholars of translation to look into different cultural contexts that influence linguistic choices and acknowledge the diversity of languages in their modes of expression, syntax, vocabulary, and grammar. As a result, translations that reflect nonequivalence often read as more genuine, and ironically more equivalent than translations that try to translate word for word.

48. Susan Bassnett, “The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies,” in *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 123.

49. Mary Snell-Hornby, *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*, (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Pub. Co, 1988), 44.

Now having reviewed the importance of acknowledging cultural context and approaching nonequivalence in translation, the second half of this section interrogates how the English translation of “Dialogues in Paradise” fared in effectively translating meaning. While we have already discussed Walter Benjamin’s pure language, I find it impossible to declare my personal interpretation of “Dialogues in Paradise” as the story’s true meaning. Instead, I will rely on my own reader experience as material when comparing meaning, while acknowledging how my personal interpretation would surely differ from another’s reading experience.

The passages I compare come from the very beginning of the short story. The Chinese and English versions are displayed on the following page.

In Chinese:

昨天夜裡又聞到了夜來香的味兒，自從你告訴過我這件事之後，這已經是第五次了。你說這話的時候，我把小小的耳朵豎起來，傾聽一種“咕隆咕隆”的聲音。那是一棵銀杏在湖心水的深處搖擺，樹上滿是小小的鈴鐺，鈴鐺一發光，就燦爛地轟響。我動了動左邊的腳趾頭，又聽見風在門外捲走了誰家的垃圾箱，總是那該死的南風。⁵⁰

In English:

Last night I smelled the fragrance of the tuberose for the fifth time since you told me about it. When you first mentioned it, I pricked up my little ears, alert to a rushing sound: a ginkgo swaying in the deep water right at the center of the lake. The tree was full of tiny bells. When the bells sparkled, they jingled in splendor. I moved my left

50. Can Xue, 天堂里的对话 (之一), (1989)

<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389426.html>

toe and heard the wind outside the door blowing away somebody's garbage can. It is always the god- damned south wind.⁵¹

In a general sense, the first passage consists of the narrator explaining her memory of her supposed lover talking about the fragrance of a flower, and the subsequent memories associated with that particular moment. While in a direct word for word sense, Janssen and Zhang's translation hits the mark. Can Xue's words have successfully been transformed into English in the most literal sense. When reading the passages together, all the phrases and words have sensible English substitutions. For example, “樹上滿是小小的鈴鐺”and “tree full of tiny bells” in a word to word perspective, translates cleanly.

However, meaning as a concept reaches beyond word to word equivalence, and I find in the English translation, much of the meaning has been lost. While meaning certainly involves understanding the text in a literal sense, the English translation failed to convey to me the same sense of wonder and spirituality the original text in Chinese had. For example, Can Xue's writing in Chinese of “小小的耳朵” evokes a feeling of childlike innocence and wonder. The double usage of “小” while directly meaning small or little in English, expresses an initial sense of sweetness through its tonality and perhaps my own personal associations that informs the rest of the passage. Moreover, “小小的耳朵” embodies a kind of delicateness while describing her ears. But in the English translation, Janssen and Zhang have written “little ears,” which in the most literal sense is an exact translation, but misses the same sensation of innocence, sweetness, and wonder. By the

51. Can Xue, *Dialogues in Paradise*, trans. Ronald R. Janssen and Jian Zhang (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 131.

same token, the word “little” somehow does not encapsulate the same delicate feeling that Can Xue’s original phrase expresses to me.

Another moment where I felt the translation fell short in conveying meaning was Can Xue’s usage of a Chinese onomatopoeic phrase, “傾聽一種“咕隆咕隆”的聲音。” Using Chinese characters, she expresses a curious sound that I can best convey in English as “gu-long, gu-long”. This phrase inspires an auditory association for the reader of Chinese, who can hear such characters aloud and imagine such a sound in real life. While we find out later that this sound is from the ginkgo tree full of tiny bells that are jingling, the initial introduction of the “gu-long, gu-long” sound conveyed to me a sense of wonder and playfulness. Although onomatopoeic phrases are also common in English, I feel the usage of “gu-long, gu-long” in a translation would sound foreign for the average western reader. As a result, Janssen and Zhang chose to use “a rushing sound” instead. While this translation reads more comfortably in English, I believe that the sensation of playfulness and child-like curiosity that Can Xue creates in this entire passage by employing literary sound devices is missing in the translation. The absence of the onomatopoeia coupled with the inadequate use of “little” earlier on in the passage deprive the English translation of much of the atmosphere of wonder that Can Xue creates in her original.

My last grievance with the English translation is the absence of a feeling of spirituality inspired by nature. Describing a ginkgo tree swaying in the middle of a lake, Can Xue writes, “那是一棵銀杏在湖心水的深處搖擺。” Through this sentence, she conveys beautiful natural imagery for her reader, describing a tree that is native to China. What is more, she uses “湖心” which translates literally as “lake heart.” While the phrase still conveys the physical location of the tree as being in the center of the water, the usage of the word for heart characterizes the lake as being

full of life and energy. For me, this passage inspires not only a sense of wonder and curiosity, but a feeling of spirituality and peace as I instinctively think of the cycles of nature. Tracing back to ancient times, Chinese art and literature has been imbued with references to nature and its components like rivers, mountains, trees as manifestations of nature's vital energy (qi). Predating the formal development of Daoism and Confucianism that are foundational to Chinese culture, the natural world has long been conceptualized in Chinese philosophy as a self-generating, complex arrangement of elements that change and rebalance in harmony.⁵² This passage, most notably through her depiction of the ginkgo tree swaying in the 'heart' of the lake reflects the long legacy of Chinese art and philosophy that has portrayed nature as spiritual and harmonious. That being said, I read Janssen and Zhang's translation of "a ginkgo swaying in the deep water right at the center of the lake" as lackluster in conveying the same cultural sense of natural spiritual beauty that Can Xue's sentence does. While many readers who are unfamiliar with Chinese culture may not even know what a ginkgo tree looks like, more importantly, the ample cultural significance of nature is missing from the translation itself. Because the words in English alone cannot possibly convey the ancient legacy of Chinese thought surrounding nature, the English translation is ultimately doomed to fail in completely conveying all the meaning in Can Xue's writing.

These examples of areas in which the English translation is unable to compensate for cultural gaps are littered throughout the short story. After comparing both texts, I found that while the words themselves had been changed into their English meanings in a very literal manner, the language alone could not transfer the many rich cultural understandings and sensations they create that lie beyond words. While of course words are integral to literature, reading literature also

52. Department of Asian Art, "Nature in Chinese Culture," In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cnat/hd_cnat.htm (October 2004)

involves a very personal experience of absorbing the emotions and atmosphere that the literature inspires. As a result, to no fault of the translators themselves, without an ample addition of footnotes and contextual clarifiers, these important characteristics anchored in cultural knowledge that live in the original Chinese text of “Dialogues in Paradise” cannot be carried over into the English translation. Consequently, my personal reading of the case study demonstrates that in many ways, translations are inadequate in bridging cultural differences, because so much meaning is lost in translation.

But on the other hand, without translation, many readers unfamiliar with the Chinese language are unable to experience Can Xue’s writing at all, however morphed it might be from the original text. The English version opens up an opportunity for a cross-cultural interaction, even though the translation can never perfectly convey a language’s meaning exactly. Antoine Berman attests to the concept of translation as literary renewal, and even go so far as to claim literary translations possess a sentiment of hospitality and facilitate exchange between different cultures.⁵³ A renewed version or rewriting of the literary text, while missing key cultural components, can still act as a bridge between cultures by allowing English readers to engage with the work of a Chinese author who is less acclaimed in the celebrated world literature. According to Antoine Berman, the foreign sound of translations indicates a lack of understanding and a chance to amend it. He explains that a ‘stranger’ lives in all translations. Reading in translation, while acknowledging the cultural relations inherent to such texts, is to become aware of an “other” and

53. Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, trans. S. Heyvaert (Albany: State University of New York, 1992).

the need for conversation.⁵⁴ For Berman, translation possesses a powerful potential for intercultural interaction and communication beyond the text itself. Translation is not just a transformation of words, but an effort to bridge cultural differences.

That being said, Lefevere acknowledges how painting translation as literary renewal with international peacebuilding capabilities can be problematic. Because translations are rewritings of an original text, they reflect the ideologies of the translator and the society they belong to.⁵⁵ This has historically resulted in bias manifesting in both translations themselves and the selection of what gets to be translated and propagated to other audiences. Colonial intentions can certainly be activated when literature is rewritten into western languages for western consumption. Lefevere cites Edward Fitzgerald, a 19th century translator of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam. Because Fitzgerald thought Persians inferior, he felt it necessary to “take liberties in the translation in order to improve on the original, at the same time making it conform to the expected Western literary conventions of his time.”⁵⁶ In essence, while it seems attractive to characterize translations as literary renewals that can open up channels for cross-cultural interaction, we cannot forget that translations are not formed in a vacuum, and exist in global system with asymmetrical power relations. In terms of my case study, is an English translation of a piece of Chinese modernist literature appropriate for facilitating increased understanding across cultural differences given both cultures undertake colonial projects?

54. Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, trans. S. Heyvaert (Albany: State University of New York, 1992).

55. André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 2.

56. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, 8.

In conclusion, when comparing just one passage of “Dialogues in Paradise” I found multiple instances in which the English translation fell short. Much of the original meaning I experienced like themes of innocence and the spiritual essence of nature were lost in my reading of the English translation. This led me to initially believe that translations of literature might be inherently ill-equipped to convey important cultural meaning. Rather than completely write translations off as unable to compensate for cultural differences, I cited two translation scholars and their idea of translations being literary renewals. Regardless of how a lot of cultural meaning was lost in translation, at least the translation exists as a rewriting of the text, to create an opportunity for engagement across different cultures and to explore difference itself. However, this insight prompted a reflection that I will flesh out in the following chapter – the colonial implications of translation. I will situate my original thesis question of if and how an English translation of a Chinese short story can bridge cultural difference by examining how translation operates within the power imbalances of our world.

Chapter V

Between Multiculturalism and Postcolonialism:

Translation’s Positionality Today

In this section I situate my thesis's original question (is an English translation of a piece of Chinese modernist literature appropriate for facilitating increased understanding across cultural differences) by assessing the relationship translation has to two contemporary ideas: multiculturalism and postcolonialism. I complicate my original question by exploring the paradox of translation being both a tool to encourage interaction in our multicultural world, and a historic reinforcer of colonial projects. Can translations of literature still bridge difference if the whole practice itself is tinged with colonial implications? I first discuss the supposed benefits translation brings to furthering multiculturalism, then apply postcolonial theory in the case of China to evaluate whether or not power imbalances obstruct the English translation's ability to bridge difference.

The paradox is as follows: Translation appears to represent a rosy, exciting future for bridging cultural differences in our modern age of multiculturalism, globalization, and increased interconnectivity. Supposedly, translations should be able to help us communicate better by fostering understanding, aiding a reciprocal flow of information, and eradicating the sense of otherness prevalent in typical cross cultural interactions. On the other hand, this picture of multiculturalism fails to consider how historically, through harnessing the power of knowledge and information, Translation has been used to reinforce colonial oppressive practices, and continues to situate itself comfortably within the asymmetrical power relations of our world today. In other words, the paradox is: How can translation be both a practice with the potential to connect disparate cultural identities and a practice that in the past and present, reinforces oppressive practices that capitalize off of a certain culture's 'otherness'?

I believe that the key to reconciling this 'paradox' lies in the definition of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is the idea within contemporary political discourse and in political philosophy

typically used by Western liberal democratic societies to positively characterize the diversity in a given society.⁵⁷ Multiculturalism is closely associated with “identity politics,” “the politics of difference,” or “the politics of recognition”, which all more or less speak to revalorizing marginalized identities.⁵⁸ But regardless of how it is typically used in a political sense, in *The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation*, Michaela Wolf attests to the ambiguous nature of the multicultural. She explains the philosophy of multiculturalism, by highlighting diversity, it actually inadvertently highlights difference. She then goes on to distinguish a cultural situation and a political situation.⁵⁹ In other words, the difference between how a government sees a scenario and utilizes certain terminology to advance a political agenda, and how the people within a given society might interpret the same scenario in a vastly different way. She writes,

“Politically, Western societies are drawing their curtains and getting ready to build fortresses; culturally, these societies are pleading for transcultural flexibility. Difference and alterity may have become legitimate, but they do not necessarily imply the basic right of equality.”⁶⁰

57. Sarah Song, "Multiculturalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/multiculturalism/>>.

58. Sarah Song, “Multiculturalism.”

59. Michaela Wolf, “The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation,” In *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, ed. by Simon Sherry and St-Pierre Paul (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000), 142. Accessed April 30, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1ckpcz7.10.

60. Michaela Wolf, “The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation,” In *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, ed. by Simon Sherry and St-Pierre Paul (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000), 142. Accessed April 30, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1ckpcz7.10.

Wolf describes a necessary distinction in the discourse surrounding multiculturalism and the optimistic hopes for translation's ability in improving intercultural differences. While this may be a genuine wish for society in some places amongst some groups of people, the political realities of certain nations must be reckoned with. What is more, while Wolf wrote the chapter in roughly 2000, in our new decade of 2020, the contemporary implications for western societies drawing their curtains and building fortresses is highly applicable, given the rise western isolationism, evidenced by Brexit and the appallingly violent anti-immigration policies from both the Obama and Trump administrations. So while institutions or groups of people might praise the utility and beauty of diversity and the multicultural, (for example the 'cultural turn' of Translation Studies in the 2000s), that by no means indicates an acceptance of alterity, nor the existence of basic, equal rights in the majority of our contemporary societies. Therefore, when it comes to Translation, given these profoundly asymmetrical global and local relations, it seems overly naive to argue that Translation can boost the multicultural current growing within the international sphere, for it is doubtful if multiculturalism even indicates the protection of 'otherness' in the first place. As a result, when it comes to answering the overarching question of this thesis, the argument that the English translation of "Dialogues in Paradise" in itself bridges cultural difference simply by existing, seems unconvincing.

That being said, contextualizing my thesis's core question by discussing translation's relationship to colonial structures appears to be a more appropriate conversation. Jeanne Garane describes translation's role in colonial projects. She writes that "the West's "cultural others" present themselves to a dominant Western, receiving "target" culture through the hegemonic

languages of empire, ostensibly for hegemonic Western audiences.”⁶¹ In other words, according to these academics, translation can be considered a colonial tool because works of nonwestern artists and writers tend to primarily translate into popular western tongues, notably English, for the consumption of western audiences. Just as natural resources and wealth is siphoned from areas in the global South to powerful western countries, knowledge and information can also be similarly shifted westward. Translations into English, French, Italian, are thus recognitions of a work’s prestige. Translation, as a result, substantiates western hegemony through this westward movement of cultural production.

For Tejaswini Niranjana, translation’s role in the colonial enterprise manifests through what she names ‘a strategy of containment.’ Niranjana claims translation is a mode of representing the Other while reinforcing the hegemonic version of the colonized. To illustrate this principle she uses an example from the late eighteenth century British efforts to colonize India through the East India Company. Translator and scholar William Jones, who arrived in Calcutta in 1783 sought to translate intellectual works from India in order to “domesticate the Orient and thereby turn it into a province of European learning.”⁶² By taking material from India, translating it through his biased lens of a colonizer, and disseminating such information to the British public, Jones and his colleagues used translation to “gather in” and “rope off” the Orient. Through translation as a means to contain and thus control information, the British administrators and officials of the East India Company were capable of crudely summarizing and paraphrasing work and literature produced in

61. Jeanne Garane, “How Postcolonial Translation Theory Transforms Francophone African Studies,” *The Comparatist* 38 (2014): 4. doi:10.1353/com.2014.0022.

62. Tejaswini Niranjana, “Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 15 (1990): 774. Accessed March 6, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/4396163.

India through their own skewed western perceptions of Indian people as *others*, in order to gate keep India as a source of wealth and resources from other competing colonizing groups. In this case, translation functions as a way of repackaging information from a cultural other, disseminating propagandized information to the colonizing public, and using such control over both the colony and information about the colony to bar potential competitors from entering and taking advantage of their resources.

However, while it is fairly clear through historical examples like the British East India Company's enterprise in India how asymmetrical power relationships are supported through translation, when referencing translations of the original "Dialogues in Paradise" in Chinese into English, categorizing translation as colonial becomes more complicated. How should postcolonial modes of thinking be applied to cases in which both the source and target cultures share colonial legacies? Leo Tak-hung Chan underlines that evaluating whether or not postcolonial translation theories are relevant to China is complicated. He acknowledges, that unlike the majority of countries in Southeast Asia, India, and countries in Africa, China has not been formally occupied by a foreign power in the past century.⁶³ Granted, extraterritorial rights over certain parts of the country have been claimed by foreign powers, but for Mainland China, where translations are carried out and published, "postcolonial" thought may not mean much.⁶⁴ He writes that through the centuries, Chinese culture has penetrated deeply into South east Asian countries like Vietnam,

63. Leo Tak-hung Chan, "COLONIZATION," RESISTANCE AND THE USES OF POSTCOLONIAL TRANSLATION THEORY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA," In *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, ed. by Simon Sherry and St-Pierre Paul, 53. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000. Accessed April 30, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1ckpcz7.5.

64. Leo Tak-hung Chan, "COLONIZATION," RESISTANCE AND THE USES OF POSTCOLONIAL TRANSLATION THEORY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA," 53.

Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Perhaps even more ironically, Chan adds that this cultural colonization was born out of the translation projects done by the Chinese of their classics and literature into languages like Vietnamese, Thai, Malay, Makassarese and Madurese.⁶⁵ Chan thus reframes the discussion by asking: What use do we have for postcolonial theories of translation in the Chinese context, and how does one apply postcolonial theory to a colonized country that is at same time a colonizer?⁶⁶ And in terms of our case study, how appropriate is postcolonial thought in evaluating whether or not the English translation *Dialogues in Paradise* plays a role in bridging cultural differences?

The key to answering these questions possibly lies in an examination of critical discourse surrounding the Chinese language itself. Postmodernist critic Zhang Yiwu asserts that translations out of Chinese ultimately cause a loss of the essence of the Chinese language's cultural memory, and give way to western influences overcoming the Chinese language. For Zhang Yiwu, since the Chinese language carries a cultural residue that has accumulated over a historical span of 5,000 years, Chinese as a mother tongue represents an ever-present, ever-powerful "collective memory" for the Chinese people. Wu also specifies that the language of literature is a "distilled essence of the mother-tongue, the agent for the spread of culture."⁶⁷ As a result, when Chinese literature is translated into English, not only is Chinese's cultural essence lost, but also the Chinese literature

65. Ibid.

66. Leo Tak-hung Chan, "COLONIZATION," RESISTANCE AND THE USES OF POSTCOLONIAL TRANSLATION THEORY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA," 66.

67. Leo Tak-hung Chan, "COLONIZATION," RESISTANCE AND THE USES OF POSTCOLONIAL TRANSLATION THEORY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA," In *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, ed. by Simon Sherry and St-Pierre Paul, 63. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000. Accessed April 30, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1ckpcz7.5.

itself becomes relegated to a subordinate position next to western literatures. Ultimately, for critics like Zhang Yiwu, translation is an inappropriate method for bridging cultural difference as it only serves to exacerbate difference by failing to ‘carry over’ key cultural aspects like the essence of a language and its long historical legacy. Moreover, in postcolonial terms, no matter China’s legacy as both the colonizer and the colonized, critics like Wu claim translations simply do not capture what is truly important when it comes to a body of literature when it comes to the historical “essence” of the Chinese language.

However, Leo Chan argues that because China has historically absorbed words from other languages like Mongolian, Pali, Sanskrit, and Tibetan, with little impact on the mother tongue, translations out of Chinese might not be as harmful as Wu believes. He asserts that the Chinese language is “strong” enough to withstand the westernization of the Chinese language in translations. Chan adds that because of translation, lexical items from languages like Hindi have entered the Chinese language.⁶⁸ He concludes that translations from Chinese into English therefore, do not need to be feared or thought of as insufficiently representing the ‘essence’ of Chinese. Therefore, given Chan’s postcolonial thoughts surrounding China’s unique positionality, I do not think that existing international power balances nor the colonial implications of translation restrict a Chinese to English translation from bridging difference.

After having considered multiple theories from schools of thought grounded in both multiculturalism and postcolonialism, I argue my question regarding translations and cultural difference is still viable even within a postcolonial framework. In the next and final chapter, I will

68. Leo Tak-hung Chan, "COLONIZATION," RESISTANCE AND THE USES OF POSTCOLONIAL TRANSLATION THEORY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA," 67.

answer whether or not I believe translations contribute to bridging cultural difference, as well as explain my original intentions for writing the project in the first place.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Reflections on Translation, Cultural Difference, and Myself

In this final chapter, I will explain why I believe that translations still bridge cultural difference, but cultural backgrounds should still be reckoned with when reading translated literature. I transition from an ‘academic’ voice to more informal writing style in order to better convey my reasons for wanting to dedicate my senior IS thesis to the topic of translation and its capacity to traverse cultural differences in the ‘Chinese context.’

I firmly believe that the English translation of “Dialogues” falls short in conveying the rich cultural messages beyond Can Xue’s writing. In the English version, we miss themes that are essential for establishing a mystical and spiritual atmosphere that pervades the entire body of work. That being said, total accuracy in a translation is impossible, for the English language might completely lack the capacity to channel the same meanings the Chinese language does because of longstanding cultural differences. To no fault of the translators, translations can only do so much in making a piece of literature make sense to a different audience.

Moreover, the translation itself offers non-Chinese readers a chance to interact with the story no matter the fact it has been rewritten and changed. By thinking of translations as literary renewals, or rewritings, we evade the trap of evaluating translations only through their ‘authenticity’ in representing the original. Personally, I believe that readers of translated literature should not merely give up in the cultural essences that are lost in translation, but take it upon themselves to do increased research and critical analysis on what is missing, why it is missing, and the larger global implications for cultural gaps in translation. For example, after realizing that much of the literary sound devices are absent from the translation, I was able to discover that sound devices were key to establishing Can Xue’s culturally backed theme of spirituality in nature. In turn, I came to the conclusion that although this gap exists between western and Chinese culture,

there is a space understanding that there exist many different ways of experiencing nature and the world.

Ultimately, it comes down to reader intention and experience when evaluating whether or not literature translations can bridge cultural differences. Alone, translations might be inadequate, for so much meaning enriched by historical cultural references is untranslatable. But when readers take initiative to research symbols used, personal histories of the author, background knowledge on the source culture, a richer reading experience becomes available that approaches compensating for such cultural differences. And when these steps are taken, translations hold great utility in both exposing the chasms of incomprehension behind disparate cultures, and offering an opportunity to approach building bridges to mend them.

Like many other people who write academic work such as theses or dissertations, I first looked for inspiration within my own personal background. My parents are both Taiwanese immigrants who arrived in New Jersey in the 1980s, looking for better opportunities in America. At the time, American exceptionalism was alive in Taiwan, and as a result their reasons for making such a daunting immigration journey was the same as many other working class immigrants - a better life, more money, and better opportunities for their children. I'm not sure what they thought of in terms of raising Taiwanese American children, and frankly, I don't think they even considered it at all. Because Taiwan is a monoracial society, I don't think they ever really interrogated the unique experiences that their children would go through growing up in a society that is anything but monoracial.

Around high school and into college was when I started to grapple with my identity in a more direct way. Armed with nice convenient terminology I now could use like "identity politics"

and “diaspora,” I was not only able to discuss but also understand my own experience by situating it within larger global trends of capitalism, patriarchy, and western hegemony. By situating myself and my parent’s immigration stories, elements of discomfort from my childhood (why do I feel the need to compete with other Asian women?, why do all the white kids at my school have more money than me?, why do my parents and I have seemingly insurmountable misunderstandings?, why does speaking Chinese make me feel insecure?) slowly dissipated the more I learned in my classes, and spoke to people with similar and different life experiences. And then suddenly, this bicultural discomfort went away as well. Now at 22 years old I’m left with a sense of pride, and an acceptance that my identity makes me unique, interesting, and more knowledgeable about the world. And as a result, I’m still fundamentally interested in culture, identity, and how these things play out in societies as complex and as diverse as our communities in America.

Then, I lived in France for 9 months. In the back of mind for most of my stay there was the daunting ‘diaspora’ thought that I was probably the first person in my entire bloodline to ever live in France for an extended period of time, and my parents could only dream of experiences such as mine living abroad in Paris. While a very complicated time period for me in terms of maturing by living in a city pseudo-alone for the first time, feeling like a kid ‘adult’ while doing things like buying groceries, and somehow always feeling like a caricature of myself (edgy liberal arts student abroad) while visiting art museums, sitting around doing absolutely nothing in local parks, and drinking tiny cups of coffee that just didn’t taste good, simply being there made me confront culture, language, and difference in ways I hadn’t before. While I grew up in a ‘bicultural’ setting, being transplanted in France, I was met head on by a culture that I thought would be familiar (isn’t the West basically the same?) but differed from American culture in many important regards. I didn’t understand underlying themes that inform French existence - republican communitarianism

that is quite strongly weaved into their standardized education system, secularism, and the most glaring: conceptions of race and racism. Also, being racialized and othered in a different way (as both an American, and a Chinese person) was alienating in a way I had not experienced before.

However, speaking French and having conversations with French people I met during my stay there helped me reconcile these cultural differences that inspired so much initial discomfort. In a way, speaking French helped me better understand French culture. I was able to converse with French students I met at the university I studied in, and discuss French usages of American slang words like “manspreading.” Instead of changing such a slang word that obviously represents something that exists all around the world, they chose subconsciously to keep the term in its English form. While now I understand this has to do with American cultural imperialism, at the time it only served to motivate my curiosities having to do with culture, language, and difference.

As a result, even after I came back to the US during the summer, I continued to reflect on my identity, my relationship to the different languages I spoke, and how culture seemed to inform everything. I somehow stumbled upon the term ‘passeur culturel’ (someone who passes through cultures) and began thinking about how such a term applied to my experience navigating different cultures whilst abroad in Taiwan and France. And then, I started thinking about translators as people. These people, I thought, must have extremely robust cultural knowledge in order to change meaning from one language into another, because translation is more complex than changing words into direct equivalents into another language. I thought of my time in France reading my text messages to my American friends and trying to translate what I was saying to my French friend. Almost everything we say in a particular language in colloquial forms is littered with expressions and requires knowledge of cultural dynamics in order to comprehend. Translators were then amazing people that I admired and wanted to write a thesis about.

I faced certain challenges though, trying to write a thesis about ‘the translator’ as a figure. It seemed there was a lack of academic thought and work on what I was initially interested in - the internal processes and negotiations translators seemed to do in their heads while translating. I realized, when working with my thesis advisor Professor Peipei Qiu, that what I wanted to write about, wasn’t actually an attempt at answering a question. After she suggested that I take a new direction - writing about comparative literature translations themselves - and then analyzing these translations and simply see what insights come forth.

This project has served me well in satisfying my many curiosities surrounding universal meaning, translation, cultural differences, and how language effects our daily lives. Translations have the ability to make us understand each other better across cultural differences, that is true. But at the same time, translations have been used historically to reinforce colonial projects, and are still used in a way today that support western hegemony through the westward movement of information and resources. Literature as an entity is still entrenched in old, European elitist ideals and the colonial way in which academic institutions instruct us to read and how we are taught to read cannot be easily reversed through studying some translations. And while I have come to a haphazard conclusion that translations can bridge cultural difference with the caveats of looking further into cultural backgrounds of the source text, I still remain curious about language, its relationship to culture, and how these two entities influence the world around us. I hope to have shed some light on a subject that deeply interests me, and to have motivated you as the reader, to ponder how stories, words, and meanings can be shaped and transformed through the constantly changing entities of language and culture.

References

Bassnett, Susan. "The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies." In *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998.

- Bassnett, Susan, and André Lefevere. 1998. *Constructing Cultures : Essays on Literary Translation. Topics in Translation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. Accessed April 24, 2020.
<http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.vassar.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=16706&site=ehost-live>.
- Bauer, Daniel J. *Asian Folklore Studies* 49, no. 2 (1990): 338-39. Accessed April 27, 2020. doi:10.2307/1178049.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Translator's Task." Translated by Steven Rendall. *TTR* 10, no. 2 (1997): 151-165. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/037302ar>
- Berman, Antoine. *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*. Translated by S. Heyvaert. Albany: State University of New York, 1992.
- Bermann, Sandra. "Working in the And Zone: Comparative Literature and Translation." *Comparative Literature* 61, no. 4 (2009): 432-46. Accessed April 24, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/40600339.
- Chan, Leo Tak-hung. "COLONIZATION," RESISTANCE AND THE USES OF POSTCOLONIAL TRANSLATION THEORY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA." In *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, ed. by Simon Sherry and St-Pierre Paul, 53-70. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000. Accessed April 30, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1ckpcz7.5.
- Department of Asian Art. "Nature in Chinese Culture." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-.
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cnat/hd_cnat.htm (October 2004)
- Garane, Jeanne. "How Postcolonial Translation Theory Transforms Francophone African Studies." *The Comparatist* 38 (2014): 188-205. doi:10.1353/com.2014.0022.
- Lefevere André. "Translation and Comparative Literature: The Search for the Center," *TTR*, 4, no. 1 (1991): 129-144.
- Manfredi, Marina. *Translating Text and Context: Translation Studies and Systemic Functional Linguistics*. Bologna: Asterisco, 2014.
- MIT. "Can Xue." Contemporary Chinese Writers. Accessed April 25, 2020.
<http://web.mit.edu/ccw/can-xue/biography.shtml>
- Niranjana, Tejaswini. "Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English." *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 15 (1990): 773-79. Accessed March 6, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/4396163.

- Song, Sarah, "Multiculturalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/multiculturalism/>.
- Suher, Dylan and Hua, Joan. "An interview with Can Xue." *Asymptote*. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/interview/an-interview-with-can-xue/>
- Tee, Carlos G. "Towards a new and more constructive partnership: the changing role of translation in comparative literature." *Fu Jen Studies: Literature & Linguistics*, no. 45 (2012): 1+. *Gale Academic OneFile Select*. Accessed April 24, 2020. https://link-gale-com.libproxy.vassar.edu/apps/doc/A326982569/EAIM?u=nysl_se_vassar&sid=EAIM&xid=77a22c8f.
- Williams, Charles Alfred Speed. *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs: A Comprehensive Handbook on Symbolism in Chinese Art through the Ages*. Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing, 2006.
- Wolf, Michaela. "THE THIRD SPACE IN POSTCOLONIAL REPRESENTATION." In *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, edited by Simon Sherry and St-Pierre Paul, 127-46. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000. Accessed April 30, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1ckpcz7.10.
- Xue, Can. 天堂里的对话（之一）. (1989)
<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389426.html>
- Xue, Can. 天堂里的对话（之二）. (1989)
<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389427.html>
- Xue, Can. 天堂里的对话（之三）. (1989)
<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389428.html>
- Xue, Can. 天堂里的对话（之四）. (1989)
<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389429.html>
- Xue, Can. 天堂里的对话（之五）. (1989)
<https://www.daocaorenshuwu.com/book/canglaodefuyun/389430.html>
- Xue, Can. *Dialogues in Paradise*. Translated by Ronald R. Janssen and Jian Zhang. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989.
- Xue, Can. *Chinese Literature Today*. By Jonathan Griffith, February 2020.
- Yokota-Murakami, Takayuki. "Translation and Comparative Literature: A Theoretical Crossroad of Cartesianism, Japanese Linked Poetry, and Postcolonialism." *Pacific Coast*

Philology 54, no. 1 (2019): 56-73. Accessed April 25, 2020.
www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/pacicoasphil.54.1.0056.